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DEHORN YOUR COMMERCIAL CATTLE

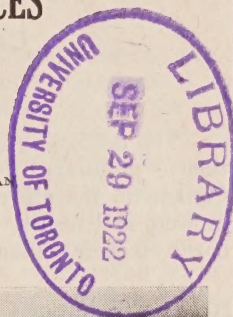
CATER TO HIGHER MARKET PRICES

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The Absence of Horns Promotes Contentment

DOMINION OF CANADA
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
PAMPHLET No. 15—NEW SERIES

LIVE STOCK BRANCH
H. S. ARKELL, M.A., B.S.A., COMMISSIONER

Published by Direction of the Hon. W. R. MOTHERWELL, Minister of Agriculture
Ottawa, 1922.

DEHORN YOUR COMMERCIAL CATTLE

CATER TO HIGHER MARKET PRICES

The dehorning of commercial cattle has recently received such striking endorsement by prominent live stock men as should result in its general practice from one end of Canada to the other. It is confidently expected that for strictly economic reasons, growers and feeders of live stock will unite in a Nation-wide movement to eliminate horns on their commercial cattle, within the next twelve months.

Horns Condemned.

Recently, at one of the most representative live stock conferences ever held in Western Canada, and at which such vital matters as breed improvement, winter feeding, organization for marketing and development of markets, etc., were under the serious consideration of Federal and Provincial Departments of Agriculture,



Only the Poorest Doing 'Animal in this Group has Horns.

agricultural colleges, representatives of live stock associations, packers, railway companies and the Canadian Council of Agriculture, the question of dehorning received significant attention, resulting in the following strong resolution of endorsement:—

“Experience has proved the great advantage from every standpoint of dehorning commercial cattle, and this conference is of the opinion that a great benefit would accrue to the live stock industry if all commercial cattle were dehorned. Every effort should therefore be made to attain this object and this conference asks for the active support and co-operation of the press, and all institutions and organizations interested in the live stock industry to encourage the practice of dehorning all horned commercial cattle between March 15 and April 15 or during the month of October.”

This resolution is an indication of the vital necessity of encouraging maximum gains in cattle for feed consumed, obtaining maximum market prices, and eliminating waste. It is a straight dollars and cents proposition and in this age of high production and marketing costs deserves your earnest attention, just as much as any other of the important problems affecting the financial status of the industry which you represent.

A Great Handicap.

Dehorning is no fad. It is a feed lot and market requirement. Horns are a handicap to commercial cattle: They add to the cost of production and discount the selling value of the animal. Your feed supply cannot stand wastage. From the calf-pen to the block, horns are a bill of expense to the producer and feeder. They are of no economic value to the farmer, butcher, or exporter, but are often the cause of unthriftiness, discontent and injury in feed lot and stable, result in the placing of "second-class goods" on the market, and cause heavy losses in killing. On the small farms and on many large ones, all classes of live stock are pastured in the same field. Scores of cases are known where, as a result of the cattle being horned, valuable young colts, sheep and lambs have either been killed or disabled through being hooked. Every year, thousands of dollars are lost to the farmer, directly through a lack of that even temperament in the herd so necessary to economical production and an equal chance for every animal in the herd and indirectly through the cut in market price levied on bruised and torn cattle.

Proof Positive.

In practical experimental work in dehorning carried on in all provinces of Canada by the Dominion Experimental Farms System, the weight of evidence in favour of feeding dehorned stock should give tremendous impetus to the policy. In one typical case a lot of eight dehorned steers made an average gain of 23 pounds over a similar number of horned animals; another lot of twenty-four dehorned steers made average gains of 41 pounds in three weeks; one lot of eight steers dehorned and running loose made an average gain of 136½ pounds, and another lot a total gain of 910 pounds. In all cases dehorned steers running loose made superior gains to tied steers.

Dehorning permits of loose feeding, a method very conducive to good gains. In a large majority of cases, no reduction in weight occurred and where met with, the loss was overcome by very substantial gains by the end of two to four weeks. It is for these reasons that all extensive cattle feeders practice dehorning.

Why You Should Buy Feeders Dehorned.

The value of purchasing steers already dehorned is abundantly proved by experiment and experience. Thirty-five steers dehorned after purchasing made an average gain of 31 pounds per head during the first month, whilst seventeen steers hornless at time of purchase made average gains of 51.9 pounds. For the entire feeding period the hornless steers made an average gain of 231 pounds, whilst those dehorned after purchase made an average gain of 186.3 pounds: The steers purchased dehorned had no recovery to make before the commencement of the test. It will pay to dehorn your cattle and, as well, to buy only dehorned cattle.

Dehorning and Market Price.

Live stock shippers find that dehorned stock is more easily loaded on the cars, rides more quietly, shows less shrinkage and damage in transit and is more economical of space than is horned stock. Cattle salesmen make quicker sales at higher prices

on dehorned stock whether for butchering or store purposes, since such cattle make up more evenly in lots, have a better appeal to the eye, and guarantee more freedom from bruises, than do horned stock. Drafts of choice dehorned cattle will almost invariably sell from \$2 and up per head above similar quality of horned stock, since uniformity of appearance has always justified a premium in price.

Meeting the Buyer's Views.

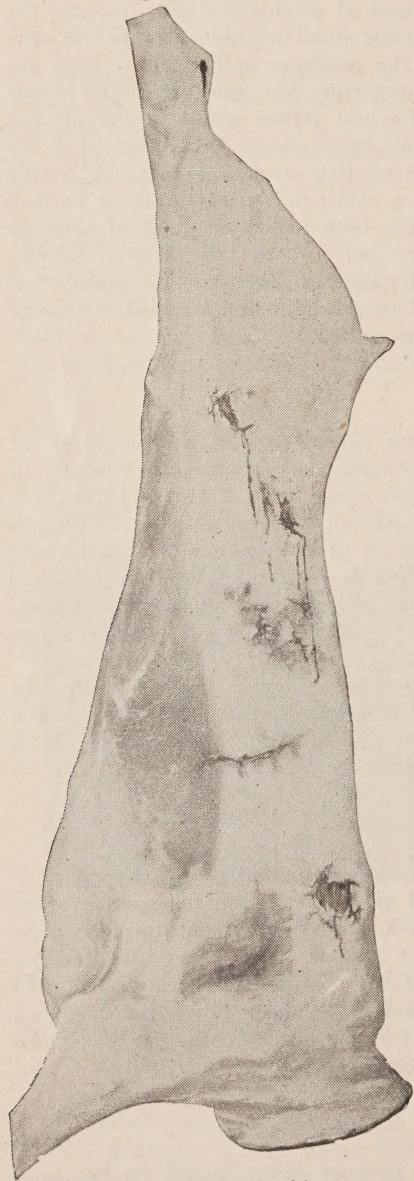
One of the largest commission firms on the North American Continent makes the following strong endorsement of dehorning:—

“No single step or operation in the handling of cattle yields bigger returns in money than the single act of dehorning. The absence of horns on a bunch of steers usually adds 15 cents to 25 cents per hundred to their value. All buyers prefer dehorned steers, even for local slaughter, as the carcasses are likely to be free from bruises and injuries; but the most important fact is that many eastern shippers refuse to bid on horned cattle on account of the practical certainty that some of them will be injured in transit. In the case of a bunch of steers that except for their horns would just suit the eastern shipper, the difference may amount to as much as 25 cents to 50 cents per hundred.”

Shipping Losses

A well known commission firm in Western Canada recently stated that: “Alberta farmers can add thousands of dollars to the value of their cattle if they would have them dehorned. We had carloads of steers and heifers on sale last fall that were so badly hooked that some were sold from \$1 to \$2 per hundred less than if they had been clean dehorned stock. We have to depend largely on Toronto and Montreal packers to take our surplus cattle. These buyers have lost very heavily on horned cattle through bruises received in the yards and in transit.”

Eastern and western Live Stock Exchanges representing the commission men on public stock yards are emphatic in their preference for dehorned stock. One prominent firm in the east states that out of 50,000 cattle handled during one year, 50 per cent were horned and were sold at a 75 cents per hundred deduction, a loss of approximately \$20,000.



The Effects of Hooking.

At the conference of shipping interests recently held at Ottawa for the purpose of extending and improving our cattle trade with Great Britain, the practice of dehorning cattle intended for immediate slaughter or store purposes, was strongly advised. It was pointed out that in the event that a store cattle trade is again undertaken with Great Britain, the absence of horns would be a very great commercial asset to the Canadian farmer.

Ultimately the farmer and feeder pay the buyers' losses through bruising and goring. The butcher and packer naturally adjust their purchasing price to cover the cost and loss in cutting out bruised portions of the carcass, and handling damaged hides. A bill of damages from horns running from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 per annum, and charged up against the industry, can easily be eliminated before next spring, if each farmer or feeder will undertake to carry out the following simple remedies.

When to Dehorn.

Dehorning should not be performed in hot weather. Possibly the best time is from the middle of March to the middle of April during spring, and in October during the autumn. In the case of calves where caustic potash is used, the time is as soon as possible after birth.

A Simple Operation.

The easiest way to remove the horn, is by the use of caustic potash and when the animal is only a few days old. Caustic potash is sold in sticks about the thickness of a lead pencil and may be purchased at any drug store for about 15 cents.

To get the best results, the operation should be done before the calf is over ten days of age. Up to and before that age the young horn, knob or bud is only loosely attached to the skull and is more a part of the skin than of the skull itself. First clip off the hair over and around the horns and apply vaseline around the edge of the hair after the clipping. This prevents the caustic potash from spreading beyond the horny surface. Now moisten the end of the caustic (not with the tongue), and rub it on each horn surface alternately for four or five times, allowing each application to dry before applying the next.

Removing the horns during the early calf stage leaves the head in better shape, a condition very desirable where heifers are to be retained for the breeding herd; but unfortunately fifty to seventy-five per cent of growing cattle carry horns.

The stick should be wrapped in paper to prevent burning the hands. Don't wet the stick so much that it runs. Don't let the calves out in the wet for a few hours, or the caustic will be washed off. To save time where there are a number of calves to treat, the animals should be tied, and the operator work down the line, starting each time on the same animal. By the time the last animal is reached the caustic will have dried sufficiently on the first one to allow of the second application.

Clippers and Saw.

After the calf is over two weeks of age, it is necessary to either saw or clip off the horns. The dehorning clippers are quicker and, whilst in either case any pain caused is largely momentary, the clippers are less painful to the animal. Clippers are recommended for young cattle, but the saw is advisable on older stock, so as to prevent splintering of the bone and slow healing. Some stockmen prefer using the clippers altogether, largely as a matter of saving time. Other stockmen prefer the saw. A safe compromise for the farmer would be to use dehorning clippers on the soft horns of young stock and the saw on the brittle horn of older stock. A dehorning clippers costs about \$14.50, a dehorning saw about \$2.50, and caustic potash about 15 cents per stick.

Care should be taken in all cases to remove the horn as close to the skull as possible so that unsightly and dangerous stubs may not grow out. It is advisable to cut in about one-quarter inch below the skin on the horn, so that the horn-forming cells may be destroyed, thus preventing any further growth.

Precaution Necessary.

To prevent fly trouble, apply some efficient fly preventive immediately after dehorning. Coal tar or products of coal tar are satisfactory and so also is pine tar: These are non-irritants. The repellent can be applied with a cloth, swab or brush and if necessary, the material thinned out with oil. If in spite of all, the horn becomes worm-infested, an application of gasoline or carbolic acid is advisable. If gasoline is used a small quantity should be poured into the horn cavity, and if carbolic acid, use a quart of water to three tablespoonsful of the acid and apply with brush or syringe. Keep clippers and saw clean. If, which is unlikely, infection occurs, the horns and cavities should be syringed out twice daily with Hydrogen-Peroxide and water, care being taken to see that the liquid is forced well in. Later on Iodine should be used as dressing. Cases of infection are extremely rare.

Dehorning Chutes.

A dehorning chute is advisable for older cattle. The average farmer could knock one together in a short time. It consists of a strong compartment with two sides and one end and is eight feet long and about five feet high with the closed end containing a head clamp in which is secured the head of the animal. The clamp

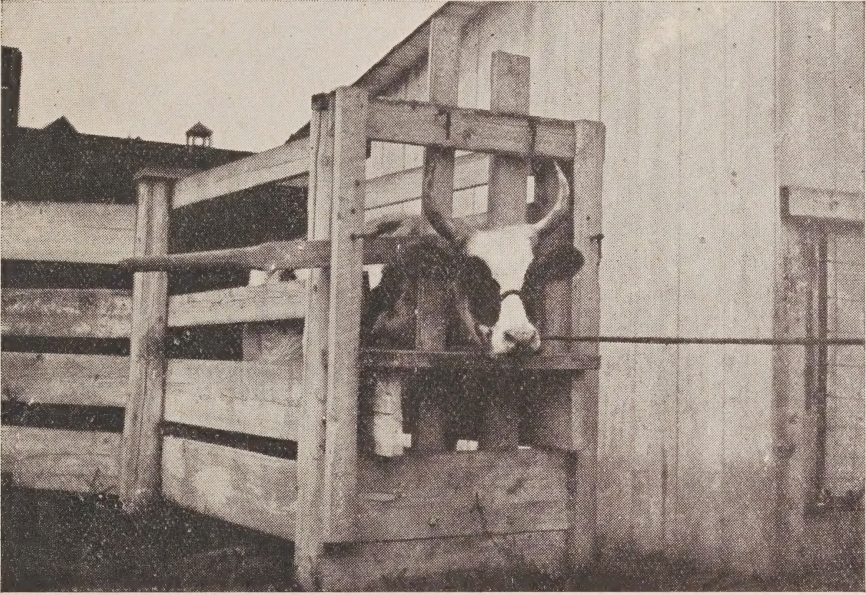


Type of chute used at Experimental Station, Summerfield, B.C. Note heavy swing gate representing left side of chute. This is swung against animal so as to prevent movement.

can be made and operated similarly to that in common use in calf pens and cattle stables, but must be made particularly strong. When the clamp bars are closed they should be about four inches apart. They should open as wide as possible so as to allow of quick entry. Chutes as illustrated in these pages are recommended both for their cheapness and efficiency.

A Last Word:

In all phases of the feeding and selling of your cattle, the simple act of dehorning is of great economic importance, and will pay well for the small amount of time required to clean up the herd.



Dehorning chute as used at Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa. (Note simplicity of construction.)

Briefly, the reason why you should dehorn your commercial cattle at the first favourable opportunity is that by so doing you will attain the following desirable things:—

1. Better market returns.
2. Maximum results for feed consumed.
3. Quicker sales.
4. Contentment in the herd.
5. Fair play in the feed-lot.
6. Easier handling.
7. Less shrinkage in transit.
8. No bruises to discount sales.

By another spring, a hornless cattle run would save many dollars to you and millions to the industry. Why not dehorn at the first favourable opportunity and thereby save dollars and cents all around?



Front view of head squeeze in chute at Summerland, B.C.